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ABSTRACT

Data collected in the course of conversations are used to compare some morpho-syntactic and discourse features of the language of non-English-speaking-background (NESB) and English-speaking-background (ESB) students and their parents. Particular emphasis is given to the processing task facing NESB children if addressed by their parents in "interlanguage" English, a form of English learned with individual rules that do not necessarily correspond to those rules commonly defined as grammatically acceptable. The NESB students' situation is examined in relation to that of their ESB peers. The kinds of educational strategies that might facilitate the language development of bilingual NESB students are discussed. A list of 12 references is included. (Author/MSE)

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THE 'BILINGUAL' CHILD AS INTERLANGUAGE HEARER:

IMPLICATIONS FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION

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THE 'BILINGUAL' CHILD AS INTERLANGUAGE HEARER: IMPLICATIONS FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION

Data collected in the course of conversations are used to compare some morpho-syntactic and discourse features of the language of non-English speaking background (NESB) and English-speaking (ESB) students and their parents. Particular emphasis is given to the processing task facing NESB children if addressed by their parents in 'interlanguage' English. Their situation is examined in relation to that of their ESB peers. The kinds of educational strategies that might facilitate the language development of 'bilingual' NESB students are among the issues discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, language is regarded as a key issue in the education of children generally, but perhaps its significance is nowhere more evident than in the education of children whose home language differs from the school language. The purpose of this paper is to provide information which should prove useful in fashioning language programs in terms of curriculum planning and classroom teaching methodology and in formulating policies regarding ethnic language maintenance in the domains of home and school.

The empirical data on which the discussion is based have been collected by the authors in the course of the last decade in Australia where the official school language is English. Per force it is the characteristics of the English language use of the children and that of the significant adults in their lives which inform this discussion. Findings are explained and illustrated in terms of the English language and recommendations concern mainly, but not exclusively, English language education across the curriculum in Australia. However, as the emphasis is not on formal linguistic expression but rather on the underlying universal meanings, findings should be of interest to teachers of other languages and generally to educators and to others concerned with the language education of children in comparable bilingual situations such as exist in many parts of the world including the U.K., Europe and North America. The language data consist of interview protocols of primary age students with a non-English speaking (NES) and an English-speaking (ES) background and their parents. In the case of children, there are additional data in the form of narrative discourse and the results of a language awareness test.

Of particular interest are two aspects of the NES parents' speech. Firstly, in what way it differs from the language of comparable ES parents. This serves the double purpose of highlighting the difference in the language environment of NES and ES background children respectively. At the same time, it documents the type of interlanguage immigrant parents are likely to use in Australia. Secondly, the NES parents' interlanguage is discussed from the point of view of the hearer's decoding task. Some selected discourse features of the language of the NESB and ESB children are also compared and discussed. With respect to the NES background children, it is not hypothesised that the same interlanguage features will be found in their language as in that of their parents. In other words, there is no suggestion of one to one correspondence of non-standard forms. Rather the contention is that the NES background may have a subtle general influence affecting their decoding and encoding strategies in a more global way. With respect to the parents, it is hypothesised that they are mature speakers of their mother tongue.

In conclusion, we argue firstly, that our findings point to bilingual language development as a good solution for children exposed to interlanguage in the home; secondly, that we have some evidence for believing that the language development of bilingual children growing up in an interlanguage home environment is not necessarily affected in an adverse way in all its aspects; thirdly, that a comparative analysis of the language of bilingual and monolingual children provides useful information for designing the language component of school curricula.

DATA

The data for this paper are drawn from taped interviews with year 5 and 6 primary-age children with an NESB and an ESB, and their parents. The children were attending both government and Catholic schools in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. They were matched for sex, age and school achievement. The NESB children came from family backgrounds in which Italian, Greek, Macedonian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese were spoken. Because priority was placed on detailed analysis of individual language use, the number of participants is relatively small - eight in each group.

The majority of parents had primary schooling only and had a lower socio-economic background. All the NESB parents used some English with their children in the home despite the fact that they were all interlanguage speakers of English in that they used non-standard, idiosyncratic forms in English, albeit with varying density. Indeed one question this paper addresses is what significance this has for their children as hearers.

The parent interviews covered ten topic areas, some of these were included in the child interviews. The shared topics, across the four groups were: 1) personal data (e.g. schooling); 2) attitude to language maintenance/bilingualism; 3) importance of education; 4) appraisal of the contribution of immigrants to Australia; 5) child's leisure activities; 6) identification with own group and stereotyping. The additional topics included in the parent interviews were suggestions for improving the quality of life in Australia and questions relevant to one of the groups only (e.g. early experiences in Australia; helping with English expression).

Section I

The Role of Shared Knowledge in Conversation : Parents and Children

Knowledge of the Topic

Language is an interactive process. Effective communication is the result of a cooperative act between speaker and hearer (Grice, 1975). The more skilled the speaker the easier the hearer's task will be. A skilled speaker knows how to signal the conceptual, formal and pragmatic aspects of the message effectively by making good use of the shared pre-knowledge between the conversational partners. It can be assumed that parents talking with their children in their mother tongue know how to tune their speech to the conceptual level of their children. As mature speakers, they share the rule system with other speakers of their dialect and exploit the resources of their language. If parents use an interlanguage, the situation is different. This is discussed in detail below.

Shared Linguistic Knowledge

Language is such an admirable tool because it can simultaneously express factual, social and affective information. This is economical but adds to the complexity of language. Speakers and hearers cope with the complexity and hence with the richness of verbal messages on the basis of a shared rule system which is a prerequisite for successful communication. One characteristic of the rule system is that some of it is obligatory and some optional, or perhaps more precisely, avoidable. For example, speakers of English must always mark tense in a finite verb phrase or number in a noun phrase. Obligatory marking has advantages because by predetermining that certain notions are to be marked, language becomes more predictable for the

hearer who as an active participant appears to shadow the speaker in some way. Obligatory marking also benefits the speaker who, relieved of the need to choose, can concentrate on other aspects of the message. In Brown's words

> I speculate that it is necessary for any language to make obligatory and automatic certain meanings in order to leave central channeling capacity free to cope with the exigencies of each particular communicative problem. (1983:65)

Obligatory Marking

The term obligatory marking refers to all the semantico-grammatical signals that must be present in a well formed string of words whether they be complete or ellipted clauses, that is, grammatically well formed clauses despite the absence of a finite verb. If the message is to be understood despite the absence of obligatory marking (e.g. grammatically ill-formed, wrong choice of words), the missing element must be restored by the hearer. What the nature of the repair work is does not concern us here. What is of import is the fact that the hearer has to supply some of the information that according to Grice's (1975) Co-operative Principle should have been given by the speaker. If this is the case then interlanguage speakers increase the processing load for their hearers (e.g. NES parent : "No much people make too many job").

Of course, mother tongue speakers also make errors requiring repair, due to some temporary difficulty such as inattention or fatigue. As a rule, however, there is a marked difference between native speakers and interlanguage speaker error rates. The language data drawn from the parent

interviews support this claim (e.g. ES parent: "but I don't think it should ever been a subject".).

The language material judged for acceptability on the basis of grammatical, semantic and pragmatic appropriateness was selected by first establishing a sampling fraction for clauses and then systematically sampling 50 complete or ellipted finite clauses uniformly across the sample in the case of parents and 25 such clauses in the case of children. The lower error rate of ESB children compared with their parents (as shown in Table 1) is due to their relatively frequent bare yes/no responses. Both groups of children were at times content not to elaborate their yes/no answers.

It can be argued that despite errors, many messages can be understood because of their context. Taking this into account, clauses were rated as containing single errors, multiple errors, or impossible to repair. Significantly there were only two ESB parent clauses where the manner of repair was in doubt. In contrast, one fifth of the NESB parent clauses could have been repaired in various ways or were impossible to repair, in other words incomprehensible. (See Table 2.) Clearly much of NESB parent speech is difficult to interpret accurately. It can be hypothesised that exposure to interlanguage puts NESB children in a position conducive to accepting inordinate vagueness in messages as a matter of course. This could be a disadvantage when faced with learning tasks where accuracy of interpretation is at a premium.

Consider the following NESB parent responses from the point of view of repair.

Single error
NES Parent: "She working a lot".

Multiple errors
NES Parent: "Because maybe after she go somewhere".

Impossible to repair
NES Parent: "I think the Australian government matter matter to think everything".

Alternative repair possible
NES Parent: "The way we like to grow up the children".
Repair A: "The way we like the children to grow up".
Repair B: "The way we bring up the children".

If it can be assumed that impairment in obligatory marking increases the processing load for the hearer, perhaps it can be also assumed that choice and uncertainty in repair will further increase this load. Moreover, it is often impossible to interpret such clauses accurately.

Optional Marking

Failure to carry out obligatory marking can be considered as impeding communication, whereas optional marking can be seen as enriching it. The elements selected for observation should illustrate this. The data base in this instance are the full answers given to 17 questions by the parents and 10 questions by the children. Again the unit chosen for analysis was the clause as this can be regarded the primary perception unit in speech processing. (See Bever, 1972:104.)

Verbal Output

The volume of responses (as can be seen in Table 3) varies considerably across the four groups. One can speculate that this is due to language competence rather than attributing greater talkativeness to native speakers of English. It may be worth noting that whereas ESB parents say three times

as much as NESB parents, the difference is not nearly as great between the children. The number of clauses uttered by ESB children was greater by one seventh.

Connectives

Connectives can serve as a good example for optional language elements because their absence does not necessarily constitute a mistake. Another area where speakers have considerable choice is in the use of connectives. English has a variety of linguistic means for making the connection between clauses, explicitly to fill the gap between clauses or to mark the boundary between them. Connectives help the listener to track relations between events while providing extra planning time for the speaker. Gap fillers and boundary markers also lighten the planning/processing task by diluting information density. At the same time, they help to maintain the impression of fluency. Although they are not essential for the intelligibility of a text, their very existence and variety is significant.

There are two overlapping systems expressing relations between clauses. One is the grammatical system of subordination and coordination. The other is the semantic system of connecting clauses 'logically' to their context (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 226-273). The 'logical' conjunctions identified in the parent protocols were categorised according to Martin (1983:21) illustrated here with examples from the protocols. The list of examples is not complete.

Additive: and, or;
Temporal: when, before;
Consequential: but, because;
Comparative: whereas.

In addition, Halliday and Hasan's continuative' category was also used. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 267-271). Parents used connectives from all five categories, but ESB parents made greater use of them than NESB parents.

Table 4 is remarkable in that it shows great similarity between parent and child use of single connectives. If one considers connectives in speech as place holders indicating to the children that a connection should be made between clauses, they may well direct non-conscious attention to these signals. This could be useful given the importance logical conjunctions play in expository prose, a discourse genre many NESB children find difficult to handle.

Examples of connectives

Conjunction
ES Parent: "I might be wrong but I used to think".

Continuative
ES Parent: "Well I think the freedom side of it".

Connective cluster
ES Parent: "He was behind a bit and then I taught him to read".

Scarcity of connectives
NES Parent: "If you start today job tomorrow may be give you sack. No guarantee you know. This not fair. Maybe I buy one house 100,000 dollars. I start job my wife together. One week after factory say sorry, no have job, you finish."

Unpredictable Elements

The use of 'fillers' and 'routines' is not obligatory and is totally unpredictable. The label routine refers to all types of stereotyped words or phrases totally or practically predetermined 'covering the full range of utterances which acquire conventional significance, for an individual, group or whole culture' (Hymes cited in Coulmas, 1981:4). (For a discussion on types of routines, see Coulmas, 1981:1-17.) For the purposes of this

discussion, fillers were considered separately from other types of routines. Words or expressions were classified as fillers if their sole function was to fill a gap giving the speaker time to plan the next verbal sequence and giving the hearer extra processing time. Where an expression also had a communicative function (and such is the case when "I think" is used to emphasise the speaker's personal opinion), the expression was not classified as a filler. Typical fillers were "I think" and "you know". ESB parents used a greater variety of fillers than NESB parents.

Coulmas explains the widespread use of routines as follows:

> ....man says the same thing a number of times not because he is a tedious bore. It happens because man has socially shared intentions stimulated to a great extent by contexts of situation which recur and so does linguistic expression because it is economical, functionally required and satisfactory.
>
> (1981:67)

Generally it can be said that gambits, a sub-category of routines, provide a semantic frame but do not convey a specific meaning (Keller, 1981:107). They can function as semantic introducers (e.g. a topic can be framed in terms of personal opinion "My personal opinion is", "I honestly believe" or "I would imagine"). They can signal the special context in terms of turn-taking signals or as indications of the speaker's social role. Typical of the former are expressions of wanting to abandon a turn e.g. "That's all". Further, they can indicate a person's state of consciousness, that is readiness to receive or provide new information, opinions or emotions, suggesting that some knowledge or concern is being shared "I didn't think that"; "That's a different question".

The above can serve as an illustration of some of the variety of functions wholly or partially prefabricated chunks can fulfil. In fact there is now growing evidence that in order to achieve native-like fluency, speakers must make extensive use of such sequences (see Peters, 1983:3). Peters maintains that it is a shortcutting device: 'It saves processing time and effort, allowing the speaker to focus attention elsewhere, for instance, on the social (as opposed to the linguistic) aspects of interaction' (1983:3). In view of the usefulness of routines and the important role they play in first language acquisition according to Peters, it is interesting to note that eighteen percent of the total verbal output of the ESB parents was classified as belonging to gambits whereas that of NESB parents was eleven percent. Moreover, every ESB parent used several gambits. In the case of NESB parents, four gambits were recorded in all.

If NESB parents do not avail themselves of routines, they increase the processing load of their children, because the verbal material to be analysed is denser. Routines can be treated as 'big' words not needing analysis. Further, the children miss an opportunity in experiencing the way social relations and discourse features can be indicated thus adding a further dimension of language. In other words, they miss out on witnessing how language can be enriched. Routines are available as an option. There are no hard and fast rules that govern their use, they are acquired in the course of the socialising process.

Examples of fillers and gambits

Fillers

ES Parent: "I sort of find that they spend sort of more time with their families".

Gambits

To introduce
ES Parent: "I don't think I ever caught an exam after that".

To mark off
ES Parent: "I couldn't read the newspaper and things like that".
NES child: "Because you don't pass your test or something".

To indicate personal opinion
NES Parent: "After,will be very easy to understand, I reckon".

Up to this point, the language data were viewed from the point of view of the hearer. What emerged was that the NESB child has a more difficult task in interacting with parents in English than the ESB child. This is the case because of the additional processing load interlanguage imposes on the hearer and because the parents' interlanguage is denser. They use relatively few optional elements so that their speech reduces rather than expands the time available for processing.

It appeared that NESB children uttered relatively more faulty clauses than ESB children. In the use of optional elements, the former were closer to their parents than to their peers. Nevertheless, the NESB children's English according to the measures we have applied, seemed much easier to process than that of their parents.

That the difference between the two groups of children is not greater is astounding given the NESB children's situation. In the home these children are constantly exposed to linguistic data they must disregard as a source of valid information about the lexico-grammatical rules of English. They must do this during an important period of language development when they are probably more sensitive to input data than they would be later as mature speakers of English.

Besides analysing the language data from a hearer perspective we also studied some of the data from a pedagogical point of view, in other words, what practical conclusions teachers could draw from the findings. With this objective in mind, the children's oral and written stories were analysed in various ways.

Section II

Communication Through Narrative: Children and Their Stories

Methodology

This section is based on the completion of stories by the two groups of children. They were given a printed text in big characters and well set out so that they were eminently legible. Two texts were used of approximately the same length (35-40 words). Their subject matter was similar in that they introduced a stranger who assumed a threatening role. The story broke off at the crisis point leaving it to the narrator to provide the subsequent events and resolution. The setting was a familiar one experientially and linguistically, namely the home and milk bar. The former was entitled Balcony, the latter Milk Bar. The protagonists were the narrator in the first person and a strange man. Other probable participants who could subsequently be easily introduced by a narrator completing the story were members of the family, police, shopkeeper, and customers. In this way, it was ensured that the completion of the story was cognitively and linguistically well within the reach of the children so that they could pay full attention to the needs of the hearer. They were made aware of hearer needs by being told in advance that they and their partner would be asked to reproduce their completed story in writing.

The children were asked to read the beginning of the story out aloud and then to invent the rest. Once read out, the printed material was withdrawn.

The two stories were evenly distributed between the two groups so that four children in each group completed the Balcony story and the other four the Milk Bar story. Each child besides completing a story wrote down his/her story and that of the partner. The oral story was taped and transcribed. In sum, the data base consists of three stories per child, in other words, a total of 48 stories.

Discussion

The analysis reported here is based on the story completion of the 1985 respondents. It is strictly exploratory, the intention being to discover trends to be studied further.

Comparisons are made within the two groups, across the two groups and in some instances between boys and girls. The latter grouping did not take ethnicity into account.

Table 6 indicates that measured in terms of clauses the total number of clauses across the three versions produced by the ESB children was greater than that of the NESB children (NESB children 241 vs ESB children 279). The range of clauses for the NESB children was 18-47 and that of the ESB children 21-35. So the range of the latter group was narrower.

Comparing the output of girls and boys, it is the girls who produced more language (girls 268 vs boys 152).

Treating the three versions as one text might appear strange to those who strongly hold the view that the written mode is radically different from the oral mode. Farr sums up this position neatly

> ....for written language, meaning primarily resides in the text itself, whereas for oral language, much meaning is communicated in the context in which the language is used. In this sense, written language is more autonomous, or decontextualized, than spoken language (1986:197).

But as Farr points out recently, researchers have tended to highlight the connection rather than the difference between the two modes. They stress that

> all language use, whether oral or written, is embedded in a social context that affects both its form and its function (1986:197).

Since the various text versions were produced in the same social context, the assumption was that some of their characteristics would not vary significantly across the oral and written modes. Consequently, it would be reasonable to compare the overall results for each group as well as the characteristics of the three stories composed by the same individual.

When the three versions were compared individually it appeared that the NESB children's oral version was significantly shorter ($\chi = 6.88$, $p<.001$) and the boys as a group said less than the girls. Comparisons of the two written versions within and across ethnic and sex groups yielded no remarkable differences in number of clauses. In other words the children sustained their writing at similar length.

The analysis of the three story versions focussed on some selected discourse features such as the structural patterns of the oral versions, types of clauses and accuracy of reproduction.

Structural Patterns

The classification scheme adopted for the structural patterns of the stories was based on that used by Peterson and McCabe (1983:37) in one type of story analysis. This approach inspired by Labov's work considers the high or crisis point as the main organiser of a personal narrative. Our classification system had to suit stories that started at the crisis point, hence the difference.

The ranking order of the oral stories was established from best to worst narrative pattern according to the following criteria.

Evaluative - The narrative comments on the crisis point(s), and then resolves it.

Disjointed - The narrative leaves out major events that must be inferred by the hearer, but the crisis is resolved.

Chronological - The narrative uses a simple description of successive events, and then stops. The crisis is not resolved.

Impoverished - The narrative presents or reiterates only two events.

Disoriented - The narrative is too confused for the hearer to understand.

Table 7 shows that the majority of the ESB children's stories belong to the two highest ranking categories. Compared with the NESB children's stories the former were more sophisticated on this measure.

Narrative Clauses

Besides such a global evaluation the narratives were also studied at the clausal level to document the hearer oriented informative aspects of the different story versions. The classification scheme used for this analysis was also influenced by the Labovian based Peterson and McCabe method of analysis but differs from it in some essential ways because the stories are not complete personal narratives as the narrator was given the beginning of the story.

Definition of narrative clauses used in the analysis.

> Action - refer to the chronologically ordered events. This is the information component of narratives, and is the only essential type. Action clauses can also serve to resolve the crisis or cap off the experience. (E.g. ES girl and boy "The police came.")
>
> Orientation - Statements that provide the setting or context of a narrative, including participants, time, location, general conditions, imminent events, objects or features of the environment. (E.G. NES boy "Then got the money from the counter." ES boy "He had tools.")
>
> Evaluation - Statements that tell the hearer/reader what to think about a person, place, thing, event, or the entire experience, for example, guesses, causal explanations, subjective judgments and internal emotional states. (E.G. NES girl "She got really mad." ES girl "He never came back again.")
>
> (Based on Peterson and McCabe 1983:31-34)

A similar categorisation scheme is probably used by most teachers teaching narrative composition and in assessing such compositions. But they may not do it consciously referring to an explicit checklist.

With respect to primary school-age children, Peterson and McCabe offer some data. According to them, even very young children use these three types of clauses in their narratives.

Not surprisingly there was some overlap of clause types in that a single clause contained a combination of action, orientation or evaluation elements. In such instances, the same clause was counted twice, in other words, it was included in more than one category. Table 8 shows that when the three versions were considered as a group the proportion of clauses with overlapping elements was about one third. But when the versions were considered individually about half to one third of the clauses belonged to more than one type. Clauses containing more than one element have greater information value and so it can be said that they are richer. There was almost no difference between the two ethnic groups in the use of such enriched clauses. But there was a difference between the boys and girls in that the girls consistently used fewer of these. In the oral versions and the partner's written version the difference is significant ($z = 2.69$, $p<.01$ and $z = 2.64$, $p<.01$). Apparently the girls spread the orienation elements across clauses rather than presenting them in the same clause.

A detailed observation of the different types of clauses yields the following information. In the case of both the NESB and ESB children somewhat over half of the clauses contain an action and an orientation element and 16 percent or somewhat fewer an evaluation element. This differs from the Peterson and McCabe observations in that the orientation element more closely approximates the action element than in their estimation. They state that action clauses are the most frequent, being the backbone of a narrative, whereas orientation clauses can be expected to occur less frequently (about one third of the narrative clauses). They

estimate that about 15 percent would be purely evaluative but that almost half of narrative comments express some evaluation (1983:48-61).

What is of interest to us here is the fact that there is hardly any difference between the two groups except for the proportion of action clauses in the oral versions. The ESB children's stories were not only longer they also used a significantly greater proportion of action clauses ($z = 2.09$, $p<.05$) so that relatively more happened in their oral stories. Curiously in the written version of their own story the NESB children increased the proportion of event clauses approximating that of the ESB children.

As Tables 9, 10 and 11 indicate, there are significantly ($p<.05$) fewer evaluation clauses compared with the other two. As evaluation clauses draw the attention of the listener/reader to the meaning of the experiences narrated, they make an important contribution to the quality of the narrative. If Peterson and McCabe are correct that about half of the clauses in children's narratives are wholly or partially evaluative, then the children in our sample are not doing as well as they should. In other words what the results of this analysis tell us is that we should pay special attention to development of this element in the compositions of children of similar age, ability and background. In order to do this, further details on the informativeness of the stories might be useful. An analysis of the orientation clause sub-categories could serve as one source of pertinent information.

Orientation Clauses

Orientation clauses provide contextual information which the story teller must share with the listener in order to make the narrative comprehensible.

Orientation clauses were subdivided into nine categories: participants, time, location, general conditions, ongoing events, tangential information, general cases, imminent events, objects or features of the environment. (Adopted from Peterson and McCabe 1983:32).

1. **Participants** - The most important element. It tells the listener who was involved including animals and animated objects.

(E.G. NES girl "It was the painter outside.")

2. **Time** - This type can refer to specific time or time in relation to other events.

(E.G. NES girl "This time he just made sure.")

3. **Location** - This type locates events, people and objects.

(E.G. ES boy "I hid behind the door.")

4. **General conditions** - These refer to environmental conditions such as weather, noise, etc.

(E.G. ES boy "I left the door open.")

5. **Ongoing events** - These tell the listener/reader what is happening at the same time.

(E.G. ES girl "A man that was standing there.")

6. **Tangential information** - This provides relevant but not necessary information.

(E.G. ES girl "The house was just across the road.")

7. **General cases** - These refer to habitual actions and general attributes relevant to the story.

(E.G. NES girl "She sulks for everything.")

8. **Imminent events** - These inform the listener/reader of what may happen next.

(E.G. ES girl "He was just about to get away.")

9. **Objects or features of the environment** - this type of clause mentions and describes objects and other details of the environment.

(E.G. ES boy "He had a thing on like Ned Kelly.")

(Based on Peterson and McCabe 1983:221-222)

An analysis of the children's orientation clauses yielded the following results.

1. **Participants** : Treating the three versions as one text one finds that both the NESB and the ESB children mentioned participants in about one-fifth of their clauses. If one compares the stories individually, it appears that the NESB children referred to participants proportionally more often in the oral and written versions of their own story but not in recording the partner's story. In the latter instance, the ESB children mentioned participants proportionally more often.

2. Time : The proportion of mentions is small and similar across the two groups of children.

3. Location : Location is mentioned in about one-third of the orientation clauses in the texts of both groups. It drops back to one-fifth in the written version of the NESB children's own story and in the written version of the ESB children's partner story.

4. General Conditions, 5. Ongoing events, 6. Tangential information, 7. General cases, and 8. Imminent events : appeared sporadically in all versions or were non-existent.

9. Objects or features of the environment outnumbered participant mention in practically every case. This reflects the fact that once the identity of participants is established pronouns and ellipsis can be used in referring to them. These linguistic devices have the merit of making a text cohesive. (See Rado and Foster 1985 and 1986.)

The elements of contextual information can be ranked according to the more or less essential role they play in story comprehension. If one looks at the proportion of orientation clauses (see Table 12) referring to participants, location and objects, one can see that a substantial majority of clauses overall belong to this essential group. These indispensible elements do differentiate between the spoken versions and the written versions of the children's own stories. (These differences are statistically significant, $z = 3.15$, $p<.05$ in the case of the oral versions and $z = 4.75$, $p<.01$ in the case of the written versions.) But whereas the NESB children concentrated more on these essential elements to the exclusion

of others in their oral narratives, the ESB children behaved in the opposite manner. The orientation clauses in their written version were almost exclusively referring to participants, location and objects.

To sum up, the analysis of types of clauses and their sub-categories shows that in the use of these, the two groups of children are remarkably similar. They satisfy the minimum requirements for comprehension in giving the essential factual information. However, the stories are rather bare in several respects. They don't enrich the context by giving environmental details and other relevant information so that a great deal is left to audience imagination. Further there is little attempt to help the listener/reader in interpreting the narrative by drawing attention to certain features by means of similes, for example, by giving explanations, expressing feelings, passing judgments and so forth. Clearly there is room for developing these children's narrative skills.

Accuracy of story reproduction

One type of comparison of the written with the oral version was that of accuracy of reproduction. The questions posed were whether one of the groups followed the story line of the oral versions more closely than the other; and whether there was any difference in the amount of material they introduced which did not occur in the original version but was invented in the process of writing.

The comparison was made by matching the written and oral clauses of the same story on the basis of their propositional content. Clauses were categorised according to the degree of similarity and dissimilarity.
The clause categories used were grouped as:

Close — **identical** - exactly the same wording is used

paraphrased - the clause is reworded but the propositional content is not altered significantly

extended - some additions are made to the original wording but with little change in meaning

reduced - some of the original wording is omitted but with little change in meaning.

Distant — **different** - participant and/or events are transformed

original - is part of the stimulus material but not part of the oral version

new - entirely novel participants and/or events are introduced

unused - oral clauses that have no counterparts in the written version.

The two ethnic groups and the boys and girls reproduced each other's stories and their own story in a similar way. About half the clauses in the original oral versions were reflected in some way in the written versions, whereas the other half was radically altered or ignored. On the similarity or closeness scale (see Tables 13 and 14), approximately one-fifteenth of the clauses were repeated word by word and about one-fifth to one-third were reworded by both groups. On the dissimilarity or distant scale (see Tables

15 and 16), just over 40 percent were ignored to be partly replaced by extraneous material which was totally new or had appeared in the original text used as stimulus material. The NESB children introduced more of such elements into the written version of their own story. In contrast, the ESB children recorded more novel material when writing down the partner's story compared with writing their own. It is interesting to note that the NESB children elaborated their story more in writing. One might hazard the guess that the act of speaking might divert their attention more from what they want to say compared with their ESB peers.

A comparison of the distance measures within the two written versions shows that the difference between these and the oral versions is mainly due to the fact that a significant proportion, mostly close to half the clauses of the oral versions were ignored. This was the case not only when the children wrote down their partner's story but also when they recorded their own. Both ethnic groups and the boys and girls as a group behaved in a similar way. (See Tables 17 and 18.)

To sum up, there is no clearly demonstrable difference between the two groups in the way they reproduce in writing a short oral narrative. Approximately half the clauses are directly connected with the original text and half are entirely new or strikingly different. The question is whether these children treat expository prose the same way, that is omit or change the propositional content of about half the clauses in a text they encounter. What is of import here is the fact that the propositional content of the clause was fully understood by the children and yet they reproduced the stories inaccurately including their own. So this was not a matter of language comprehension but rather the task of recording a familiar

shorter texts tend to contain fewer enriching details. The NESB children by providing shorter texts get less practice in elaborating their stories in the direction of more mature narratives. This should be kept in mind when planning programs so that they can be fine-tuned to cater for individual needs. In order to do this, one can analyse the quality of the students' narrative prose in ways we have discussed. Categorisation schemes such as ours are within the reach of teachers.

To sum up, the discourse characteristics we have selected and the evaluation tool we have adopted can serve teachers, whether mother tongue or foreign/community language teachers, well. They can use them to identify student needs in some detail and to assess the quality of compositions from the discourse point of view in a systematic way. It would enable them to compare student compositions of varying length. At a time when teachers are given increasing assessment responsibilities coupled with demands of accountability, the method presented here should be of interest.

text. If such material is reproduced inaccurately, one wonders how conceptually new material would be treated by these children. The question that need, to be pursued is whether the children don't consider accuracy important, that is, they could do it if they wanted to, or whether they do find it difficult to record what they know.

CONCLUSION

In general, the lack of significant difference (when the length of the narratives is controlled by comparing proportions of clauses) between the narratives of NESB and ESB children is a startling finding. It indicates that both groups of children approach the construction of a narrative text in similar ways. In other words, they share the same strengths and weaknesses. They have some appreciation of how clauses should be sequenced and linked and what essential information the listener needs. But their narratives lack quality. In concentrating on the most essential details, they make their stories intelligible on the literal level but fail to invest them with a particular meaning. In other words the stories tend to be colourless and pointless.

The fact that the results are not very different is reassuring in that it is one indication that the NESB and ESB children are similar in the ability of handling discourse. If this is the case, the same language teaching program should suit both groups. At this point it might be wise to pause and reflect that on the whole in absolute frequency the ESB children out-performed the NESB. On a given task with no time limit imposed, the output of the NESB children was smaller. This has a certain significance since

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APPENDIX

Table 1 : Faulty Clauses

Table 2 : NES Message Restoration

Table 3 : Number of Clauses

Table 4 : Connectives

Table 5 : Unpredictable Elements

Table 6 : Narrative Clauses

Table 7 : Structural Patterns

Table 8 : Overlapping Clause Types

Table 9 : Clause Types in Oral Version

Table 10 : Clause Types in Written Version-Own

Table 11 : Clause Types in Written Version-Partner

Table 12 : Orientation Clauses

Table 13 : Close Measures for Written Version-Own

Table 14 : Close Measures for Written Version-Partner

Table 15 : Distance Measures: Oral vs Written Version-Own

Table 16 : Distance Measures: Oral vs Written Version-Partner

Table 17 : Different Distance Measures: Oral vs Written Version-Own

Table 18 : Different Distance Measures: Oral vs Written Version-Partner

Table 1

Faulty Clauses

Parents' clauses n=400		Children's clauses n=200	
	%		%
NESB	66	NESB	37
ESB	11	ESB	7

Table 2

NES Message Restoration

	Clauses n=400		Faulty clauses n=264	
Restoration	%		%	
Single	46		70	
Multiple	8)	20	12)	30
Impossible	12)		18)	

Table 3

Number of Clauses

	f	Average
NESB Parent	1098	137
ESB Parent	3150	394
NESB Child	362	45
ESB Child	417	52

Table 4

Connectives

	NESB Parent	ESB Parent	NESB Child	ESB Child
Clauses	1098	3150	362	417
	%	%	%	%
Connectives	31	41	29	41

Table 5

Unpredictable Elements

	NESB	ESB	NESB	ESB
Clauses	1098	3150	362	417
	%	%	%	%
Fillers	7	12	0	2
Routines : Gambits	11	18	9	13

Table 6

Comparison of Total Narrative Clauses

Children		Oral Story Cl	Written:Own Story Cl	Written: Partner's Story Cl	Total
NESB	Sex				
(Non-	G	5	6	9	20
English	G	16	10	14	40
Speaking)	G	6	6	8	20
	G	25	12	10	47
	B	16	11	16	43
	B	6	5	9	20
	B	6	13	14	33
	B	6	5	7	18
ESB					
(English-	G	15	11	6	32
Speaking)	G	23	13	7	43
	G	9	6	6	21
	G	14	10	21	45
	B	15	11	6	32
	B	23	13	7	43
	B	9	6	6	21
	B	14	10	21	45
Totals:		210	149	161	520
NESB Totals:		86	68	87	241
ESB Totals:		124	81	74	279
NESB Average:		10.7	8.5	10.8	30.1
ESB Average:		15.5	10.1	9.25	34.8
Boys Totals:		97	75	80	252
Girls Totals:		113	74	81	268

Table 7

Story Distribution According to Structural Patterns

	NESB	ESB
Evaluative	2	5
Disjointed	1	2
Chronological	3	0
Impoverished	1	0
Disoriented	1	1

Table 8

Overlapping Clause types

	Oral:Own Story			Written:Own Story			Written:Partner's Story			Total		
	TC1 f	OC1 f	OC1 %	T f	WC1 f	WC1 %	TC1 f	WC1 f	WC1 %	T f	C1 f	C1 %
NESB	86	25	29	68	24	35	87	29	33	241	78	32
ESB	124	44	35	81	29	36	74	22	30	279	95	34
Boys	97	41	42	75	30	40	80	27	34	252	98	39
Girls	113	28	25	74	23	31	81	24	30	268	75	28

Table 9

Comparison of Action, Orientation and Evaluation Clauses in Oral Version

			Oral					
		Cl	Act		Ori		Eva	
		f	f	%	f	%	f	%
NESB	G	5	4	80	1	20	1	20
	G	16	6	38	6	38	6	38
	B	16	14	88	11	69	0	0
	B	6	4	67	3	50	0	0
	B	6	4	67	3	50	1	17
	G	6	6	100	6	100	0	0
	G	23	5	20	13	52	6	24
	B	6	3	50	5	83	4	67
ESB	G	15	7	47	7	47	6	40
	G	23	15	65	12	52	0	0
	B	29	25	86	20	69	1	3
	B	10	7	70	5	50	2	20
	B	15	9	60	9	60	2	13
	G	9	7	78	6	67	1	11
	G	14	10	71	10	71	0	0
	B	9	4	44	7	78	1	11
Totals:		210	130	62	124	59	31	15
NESB Totals:		86	46	53	48	56	18	21
ESB Totals:		124	84	68	76	61	13	10
Boys Totals:		97	70	72	63	65	11	11
Girls Totals:		113	60	53	61	54	20	18

NB: Act = Action; Ori = Orientation; Eva = Evaluation; Cl = clause.

Table 10

Comparison of Action, Orientation and Evaluation Clauses in Written Version: Own

		Cl	Act		Ori		Eva	
		f	f	%	f	%	f	%
MIXB	G	6	5	83	1	17	1	17
	G	10	4	40	4	40	3	30
	B	11	8	73	6	55	0	0
	B	5	4	80	4	80	0	0
	B	13	11	85	9	69	1	8
	G	6	5	83	5	83	0	0
	G	12	8	67	6	50	4	33
	B	5	4	80	3	60	1	20
SXB	G	11	6	55	6	55	2	18
	G	13	8	62	9	69	0	0
	B	15	13	87	8	53	1	7
	B	9	5	56	3	33	2	22
	B	10	5	50	5	50	1	10
	G	6	6	100	4	67	0	0
	G	10	6	60	6	60	1	10
	B	7	3	43	5	71	1	14
Totals:		149	101	68	84	56	18	12
MIXB Totals:		68	49	72	38	56	10	15
SXB Totals:		81	52	64	46	57	8	10
Boys Totals:		75	53	71	43	57	7	9
Girls Totals:		74	48	65	41	55	11	15

Table 11

Comparison of Action, Orientation and Evaluation Clauses in Written Version:Partner's

			Partner's Written					
		Cl	Act		Ori		Eva	
		f	f	%	f	%	f	%
NESB	G	6	5	83	5	83	1	17
	G	7	6	86	9	129	0	0
	B	11	13	118	10	91	1	9
	B	4	5	125	5	125	2	50
	B	11	6	55	6	55	2	18
	G	6	6	100	6	100	0	0
	G	21	7	33	6	29	0	0
	B	8	3	38	6	75	1	13
ESB	G	9	4	44	1	11	1	11
	G	14	3	21	4	29	2	14
	B	16	8	50	7	44	1	6
	B	9	4	44	3	33	0	0
	B	14	6	43	8	57	2	14
	G	8	5	63	5	63	0	0
	G	10	9	90	8	80	5	50
	B	7	5	71	8	114	0	0
Totals:		161	95	59	97	60	18	11
NESB Totals:		74	51	69	53	72	7	9
ESB Totals:		87	44	51	44	51	11	13
Boys Totals:		80	50	63	53	66	9	11
Girls Totals:		81	45	56	44	54	9	11

Table 12

Orientation Clauses Referring to Participants, Location and Objects

	Oral Version			Written Version of Own Story			Written Version of Partner's Story		
	T	f	%	T	f	%	T	f	%
NESB	57	44	82	48	41	59	58	46	79
ESB	84	48	57	54	25	95	44	34	77

Table 13

Close Measures for Own Version:Written

		Id		Para		Ext		Red		Clt
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
NESB	G	1	20	1	20	0	0	1	20	3
	G	0	0	1	6	1	6	5	31	7
	B	2	13	5	31	0	0	1	6	8
	B	1	17	3	50	0	0	0	0	4
	B	1	17	2	33	0	0	0	0	3
	G	5	83	1	17	0	0	0	0	6
	G	0	0	7	28	0	0	1	4	8
	B	3	50	0	0	1	17	0	0	4
ESB	G	2	13	4	27	0	0	3	20	9
	G	2	9	4	17	1	4	4	17	11
	B	4	14	9	31	1	3	1	3	15
	B	4	40	3	30	0	0	1	10	8
	B	1	7	1	7	1	7	3	20	6
	G	1	11	0	0	0	0	5	56	6
	G	3	21	3	21	1	7	2	14	9
	B	1	11	4	44	0	0	0	0	5
Totals:		31	15	48	23	6	3	27	13	112
NESB Totals:		13	15	20	23	2	2	8	9	43
ESB Totals:		18	15	28	23	4	3	19	15	69
Boys Totals:		17	18	27	28	3	3	6	6	53
Girls Totals:		14	12	21	19	3	3	21	19	59

Note: ID = Identical; Para = Paraphrased; Ext = Extended; Red = Reduced; Clt = Clause Totals.

Table 14

Close Measures for Written Version:Partner's

		Cl	Id		Para		Ext		Red		Clt	
		f	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
NESB	G	15	0	0	2	13	1	7	0	0	3	20
	G	23	0	0	5	22	0	0	2	9	7	30
	B	29	6	21	9	31	0	0	0	0	15	52
	B	10	1	10	1	10	1	10	3	30	6	60
	B	15	1	7	3	20	0	0	1	7	5	33
	G	9	1	11	5	56	0	0	1	11	7	78
	G	14	0	0	3	21	0	0	1	7	4	29
	B	9	1	11	5	56	0	0	0	0	6	67
ESB	G	5	1	20	2	40	1	20	0	0	4	80
	G	16	1	6	3	19	0	0	0	0	4	25
	B	16	3	19	3	19	0	0	0	0	6	38
	B	6	0	0	3	50	0	0	0	0	3	50
	B	6	1	17	2	33	0	0	0	0	3	50
	G	6	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0	6	100
	G	25	3	12	5	20	0	0	1	4	9	36
	B	6	0	0	1	17	0	0	0	0	1	17
Totals:		210	21	10	56	27	3	1	9	4	89	42
NESB Totals:		124	10	8	33	27	2	2	8	6	53	43
ESB Totals:		86	11	13	23	27	1	1	1	1	36	42
Boys Totals:		97	13	13	27	28	1	1	4	4	45	46
Girls Totals:		113	8	7	29	26	2	2	5	4	44	39

Table 15

Comparison of Oral with Own Written Version:Distance Measure

	Total Clauses	New		Original Text		Total Clauses	Different		Unused	
	f	f	%	f	%	f	f	%	f	%
Total	149	11	7	13	8	210	11	5	89	42
NESB	68	10	15	9	13	86	6	7	35	41
ESB	81	1	1	4	5	124	5	4	54	44
Boys	75	4	5	12	16	97	4	4	41	42
Girls	74	7	9	1	1	113	7	6	48	42

Table 16

Comparison of Oral with Partner's Written Version:Distance Measure

	Total Clauses	New		Original Text		Total Clauses	Different		Unused	
	f	f	%	f	%	f	f	%	f	%
Total	149	25	17	16	11	210	26	12	93	44
NESB	87	12	14	4	5	124	13	10	53	43
ESB	74	13	18	12	16	86	13	15	40	47
Boys	80	5	6	16	20	97	12	12	39	40
Girls	81	20	25	0	0	113	14	12	54	48

Table 17

Comparison of Different Distance Measures Within Same Group: Oral/Own Written Version

	NESB			ESB			Boys			Girls		
	TC1	f	%	TC1	f	%	TC1	f	%	TC1	f	%
New	68	10	15	81	1	1	75	4	5	74	7	9
Original	68	9	13	81	4	5	75	12	16	74	1	1
New	68	10	15	81	1	1	75	4	5	74	7	9
Different	86	6	7	124	5	4	97	4	4	113	7	6
New	68	10	15	81	1	1	75	4	5	74	7	9
Unused	86	35	41	124	54	44	97	41	42	113	48	42
Original	68	9	13	81	4	5	75	12	16	74	1	1
Different	86	6	7	124	5	4	97	4	4	113	7	6
Original	68	9	13	81	4	5	75	12	16	74	1	1
Unused	86	35	41	124	54	44	97	41	42	113	48	42
Different	86	6	7	124	5	4	97	4	4	113	7	6
Unused	86	35	41	124	54	44	97	41	42	113	48	42

Table 18

Comparison of Different Distance Measures Within the Same Group: Oral /Partner's Written Version

	NESB			ESB			Boys			Girls		
	TC1	f	%	TC1	f	%	TC1	f	%	TC1	f	%
New	87	12	14	74	13	18	80	5	6	81	20	25
Original	87	4	5	74	12	16	80	16	20	81	0	0
New	87	12	14	74	13	18	80	5	6	81	20	25
Different	124	13	10	87	13	15	97	12	12	113	14	17
New	87	12	14	74	13	18	80	5	6	81	20	25
Unused	124	53	43	87	40	46	97	39	40	113	54	48
Original	87	4	5	74	12	16	80	16	20	81	0	0
Different	124	13	10	87	13	15	97	12	12	113	14	12
Original	87	4	5	74	12	16	80	16	20	81	0	0
Unused	124	53	43	87	40	45	97	39	40	113	54	48
Different	124	13	10	87	13	15	97	12	12	113	14	12
Unused	124	53	43	87	40	46	97	39	40	113	54	48